

## When God's Ways Don't Make Sense, Part 2 - Acts 12:7- – December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007

- In the text before us, we are presented with a problem, and a mystery of sorts. God truly does work in mysterious ways.
- What's the problem, and where's the mystery? James is martyred in verse two, and Peter is rescued in verse 11.
- This doesn't make sense; "why would God allow James to be martyred and Peter to be rescued both in the same chapter?"

- Since His ways are higher than our ways, we can't always know the ways or even the why's of God.
- We can however, find some clues woven into the fabric of our text that can help us when God's ways just don't make sense.
- We looked at three of them in part one two weeks ago.

- 1. Wait for God's timing** (Verses 1-4) Peter waits in prison until after the Passover before God sends an angel to miraculously rescue him.
- 2. Pray to God earnestly** (Verse 5) While Peter is kept in prison, the church prayed earnestly for him, possibly that God would rescue him.
- 3. Rest in God's promise** (Verse 6) The night before Herod was to execute Peter, he's getting a good night's rest and is actually sleeping.

### **4. Know that God's present (Verse 7a)**

7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell.

v7 Says that an angel of the Lord appeared suddenly and that a light shone in the cell brightly. The Lord's is present there with Peter.

"Luke uses an interesting word for prison. It is *oikema*, a word that occurs only here in the New Testament. It literally means dwelling. The Lord's continuing presence in that prison had converted Peter's cell into a home. Peter had quietly made himself at home in those uncongenial surroundings." John Phillips "Exploring Acts," Volume 1, p 227

### **5. Believe in God's miracles (Verse 7b)**

...He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

v7 It's interesting that Peter was in such a deep sleep that the angel of the Lord had to strike him to wake him up.

v7 He tells Peter to get up quickly, and the chains miraculously fall off Peter's wrists.

"Peter apparently recognized divine intervention of a supernatural kind in the event, and so evidently did Luke; the opening words of v.7 are very similar to the words at the beginning of Luke 2:9, where the angel appears to the shepherds to announce the birth of Christ. A striking modern parallel has been quoted more than once from the experiences of Sundar Singh. By order of the chief lama of a certain Tibetan community he was thrown into a dry well, the lid of which was securely locked. Here he was left to die, like many others before him, whose bones and rotting flesh lay at the bottom of the well. On the third night, when he had been crying to God in prayer, he heard someone unlocking the lid of the well and removing it, and then a voice spoke telling him to take hold of the rope that was being lowered. He did so, and was glad to find a loop at the bottom of the rope in which he could place his foot, for his right arm had been injured before he was thrown down. He was then drawn up, the lid was replaced and locked, but when he looked round to thank his rescuer, he could find no trace of him. The fresh air revived him, and his injured arm felt whole again. When morning came, he returned to the city where he had been arrested, and resumed preaching. News was brought to the lama that the man who had been thrown into the execution-well for preaching had been liberated and was preaching again. Sundar Singh was brought before him and questioned, and told the story of his release. The lama declared that someone must have took hold of the key and let him out but when search was made for the key, it was found attached to the lama's own girdle!" F.F. Bruce "The New International Commentary on the New Testament" pp 249, 250

### **6. Obey all God's instructions (Verse 8)**

8 Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him.

v8 The angel of the Lord gives Peter specific instructions to put on his clothes, cloak, and sandals, and follow him, and Peter obeyed.

### **7. Follow all God's directions (Verses 9-10)**

9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

v9 Peter follows the angel of the Lord out of the prison, even though he had no idea what he was doing or what was really happening.

v10 They pass the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> guards, go through an iron gate which opens by itself, and after walking down one street the angel leaves.

- The angel just leaves and Peter is not given any more directions beyond this point. "When it doesn't make sense, use common sense."

"The angels work was done. There was no farewell, no word of instruction as to what he should do or where he should go. Apart from telling him to get up, get dressed, and get going, the angel had said nothing at all. He had one commission from the throne – to set Peter free – and he kept well within the limits of his mandate. He was not sent to tell Peter all about heaven he would find that out for himself one day. He was not sent to tell Peter how to proceed with the ministry entrusted to him – that was the Holy Spirit's work. He was not authorized to tell Peter what to do next – he left that to Peter's common sense. He was simply sent to set Peter free him in answer to the prayers of an importunate church. When that was done he disappeared." John Phillips, "Exploring Acts" Volume 1 p 228